

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05 SAJ-01 OMB-01 /084 W

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R 051409Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4204

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5748

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PLO UR SY

SUBJECT: ZOHAYR MUHSEN SOUNDSOFF--AGAIN--ABOUT SOVIET POLICY

REF: (A) BEIRUT 5452; (B) BEIRUT 5517

1. ZOHAYR MUHSEN, LEADER OF SYRIAN-BACKED SA'IQA AND HEAD OF PLO MILITARY DEPT., WAS AGAIN IN NEWS MAY 3 CRITICIZING SOVIET POLICY TOWARD PALESTINIANS. MUHSEN, WHO HAD BAILED OUT OF PLO DELEGATION UNDER 'ARAFAT WHICH JUST WOUND UP SIX-DAY VISIT TO USSR, TOLD LOCAL DAILY AL JARIDA HE THOUGH MOSCOW HAD MADE "MISTAKE" IN OFFERING TO GUARANTEE ISRAEL'S SECURITY WITHIN 1967 BORDERS. ELABORATING HIS VIEWS, MUHSEN IS QUOTED AS
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FOLLOWS: "PARTIES THAT REALLY NEED GUARANTEES ARE PAL-

ESTINIANS FIRST, AND ARAB COUNTRIES SECOND. I CANNOT UNDERSTAND HOW GROMYKO COULD MAKE MISTAKE OF PICTURING A PYRAMID UPSIDE DOWN..."

2. ASKED ABOUT HIS REASONS FOR NOT RPT NOT ACCOMPANYING 'ARAFAT TO MOSCOW, MUHSEN REPORTEDLY ASSERTED THAT HE WAS RELUCTANT TO JOINT DELEGATION "THAT DOES NOT HAVE SPECIFIC TASK" AND STRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT TIME HAS COME TO "PLACE OUR (I.E., PLO) RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION IN SERIOUS AND ORGANIZED FRAMEWORK." MUHSEN DENIED THERE WERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND PLO EXCOMM BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE "POSSIBLY" HAD SOME TROUBLES WITH 'ARAFAT.

3. COMMENT: SUSPICION GROWING AMONG LOCAL OBSERVERS AS MUHSEN CONTINUES PUBLIC SNIPING AT SOVS IS THAT HE HAS AT LEAST ACQUIESCENCE OF HIS SYRIAN BACKERS. ONE VERSION CIRCULATING HERE, WHICH TENDS TO BE BORNE

OUT BY HIS ADMISSION OF TROUBLES WITH 'ARAFAT, IS THAT MUHSEN IS MIFFED OVER RECENT PLO EXCOMM REFUSAL TO APPOINT HIM AS PLA COMMANDER TO REPLACE DEPOSED MAJ. GEN MISBAH BUDAYRI. (EXCOMM REPORTEDLY NAMED BRIG. MUHAMMED WALID JAMMUNS AS ACTING PLA COMMANDER LATE LAST MONTH.) WHILE PROCESS OF REPLACING BUDAYRI, WHO HAD BECOME CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE IN PLO CIRCLES, COULD INDEED HAVE GENERATED HEAT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN MUHSEN AND 'ARAFAT, WE FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE MUHSEN WOULD HAVE LAUNCHED INTO DIATRIBES AGAINST SOVIET UNION FOR THIS REASON ALONE. SEEMS MORE PLAUSIBLE THAT MUHSEN--AND BY EXTENSION SARG--MAY HAVE DEVELOPED REAL DOUBTS ABOUT AND SERIOUS RESERVATIONS TOWARD RECENT TURNS IN SOVIET ME POLICY.
GODLEY

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